

Managing Change and Stress Lesson Plan

Time Required: 2 Hours

Workshop Objectives:

The purpose of this workshop is to increase awareness of the change process, to identify stress symptoms, to identify ways to cope with changes and the accompanying stress as well as to have participants construct a plan to deal with stress in a healthier manner.

This workshop will prepare participants to:

1. Identify the various effects change may have on their life.
2. Identify new ways of coping with changes.
3. Recognize the symptoms of stress.
4. Identify a number of ways to reduce stress.
5. Create a stress reduction plan.

Resources Needed:

Materials:

Manual/workshop handouts

Equipment:

Flip chart
Markers
Name tents

I. Welcome and Introductions

A. Presenter(s)

Introduce yourself, giving details about your current position and any past experience that relates to this workshop. Welcome the participants to the workshop.

B. Participants

Ask participants to give their names and what they hope to learn from the workshop. Write responses on flip chart.

II. Workshop Objectives

Display on flip chart. Review workshop objectives and address how they relate to the expectations expressed by the participants.

After the completion of the workshop, participants will be able to:

A. Identify the various effects change may have on their life.

B. Identify new ways of coping with changes.

C. Recognize the symptoms of stress.

D. Identify a number of ways to reduce stress.

E. Create a stress reduction plan.

III. Overview of Change and Transitions

Provide the following in a lecture format. Put key words or points on a flip chart.

A. Definition of change - a situation that is replaced or shifted from one to another.

B. Definition of transition - passage from one stage or situation to another; movement, development, or evolution from one place to another. Reaction to the change and movement toward or away from the new situation.

C. Four important aspects to remember about change --

1. Change is constant - changes in world of work, government, society.

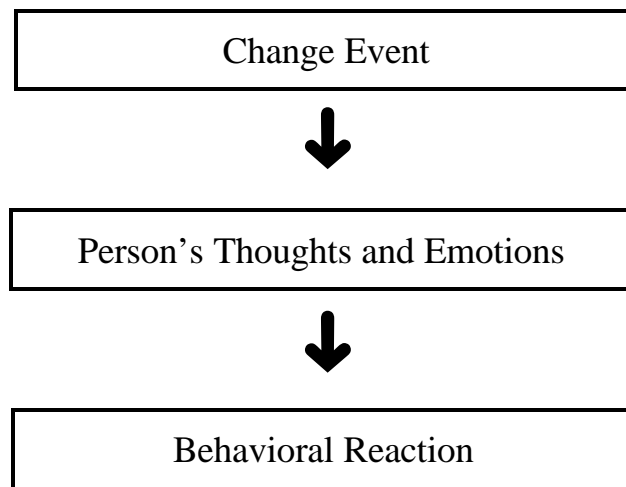
2. Change is complex - With each change one needs to look at how the change affects roles, routines, relationships and view of self.

3. Change is personal - everyone will handle change differently. Reactions depend on a person's background, culture, temperament, etc.

4. Change takes time - everyone needs time to adjust to a change. The adjustment period may take 6 months to 2 years depending on the scope and significance of the change for the person.

- D. Change can be positive or negative and will cause an emotional reaction. People are often resistant to both types because change disrupts the comfortable routine.

Reproduce the follow graphic on a flip chart and use it to explain the concept described below it.



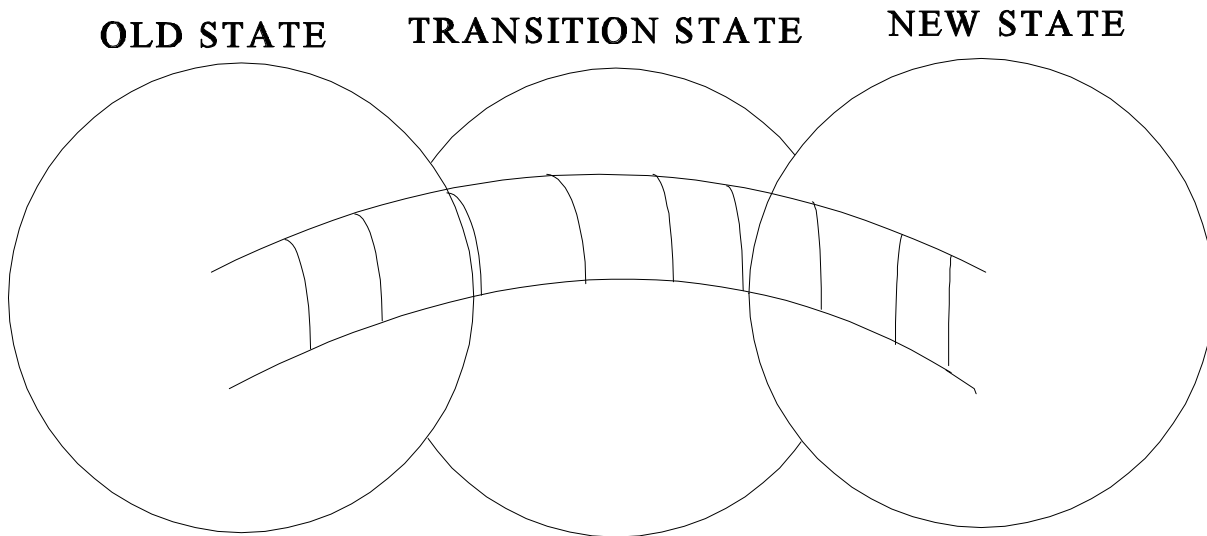
This is a way to look at the CHANGE EVENT. The person's THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS about the event determine the person's BEHAVIORAL REACTION to the event. The person's emotional reaction and perspective determines the view of the change as positive or negative. Each person controls how she/he will express reactions, thoughts and emotions.

- E. Transitions may alter a person's life in the following ways:
1. Daily Activities - for example, a new job may require a shift in a person's wake-up time, require commuting and the need to get a child to a caretaker.
 2. Interpersonal Interactions - for example, a new job may require a new set of responsibilities and the need to relate to co-workers, to develop a relationship with a child care provider. It may change the parent/child relationship.
 3. A new awareness of oneself and the world - for example, a person in a new position may discover personal strengths such as initiative, dedication, flexibility, a good phone manner and attention to detail that were previously unrecognized but have always helped her/him deal with life.

It is not the actual change event or non-event (marriage, birth, promotion that did not happen, fatal illness that went into remission) that is most critical, but the way the individual views the event and decides how to cope with the change that causes stress.

IV. **Stages of a Transition**

Reproduce the follow graphic on a flip chart and use it to explain the stages as described below it.



- A. **OLD STATE** - Old roles, familiar, comfortable, controllable.
- B. **TRANSITION STATE** - Is the link between the old and new state. Letting go of the old work, roles, and routines and giving up the sense of comfort. Typical emotions include denial, frustration, cynicism, anger as well as relief or excitement. Emotional reactions may be extreme.

Caught between the old and new way, the individual experiences a sense of loss and gain. It's a time of chaos, but could also be a time of creativity and transformation. A state of confusion without clear answers will be present.

The person is learning the ropes of the new situation, learning to cope with the changing demands and tasks. New roles may feel uncomfortable and unpredictable or challenging and invigorating.

- C. **NEW STATE** - New roles, routines, relationships, ideas and assumptions about oneself have been incorporated or assimilated. The individual may start out feeling nervous, but eventually will feel energetic, productive and hopeful.

D. **OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS TO ADDRESS:**

1. Stress is a normal reaction to change/transitions. A time of change is a time of great stress. It is recommended that a person NOT change many areas at once. If this happens, the person may experience extreme stress reactions for an extended period of time.
2. Six months, a year, sometimes 2 years may pass before one moves fully through a major transition. Realizing this makes it possible to be kinder to oneself while stumbling through the process, and kinder and more understanding to friends or co-workers who have difficulty coping with change.

V. **Managing the Transition**

A. Self - How has the person handled change/transitions successfully in the past?

Exercise: **Reviewing a Past Successful Change** (handout) -

Have each person write down a change or transition they successfully managed in the past. Have them describe the steps they took in detail. After they are finished, ask them to list the skills they used in their successful transition. Ask the group to tell you skills or personal traits they used to cope. Write these on a flip chart. Discuss whether they can use the same skills with their current transition.

B. Support Network - How can others help the individual through the transition?

Exercise: **Identifying Others Who Can Help and Provide Support** (handout)

Identify others in their lives who can provide:

Child care, Transportation

Empathy and a sympathetic ear

Affirmation and encouragement

Information needed to successfully make a change

People who could provide support include family, friends, neighbors, church members, other group/club members, community organizations, and professionals. Ask the group to comment on their reactions to this exercise.

- C. Strategies - practical ways to manage the transition. Write on flip chart.
Ask the group to suggest strategies and write them on a flip chart. Include the following strategies if they are not mentioned by the group.

1. Seek advice/counseling.
2. Assert yourself.
3. Brainstorm a plan.
4. Re-arrange priorities.
5. Re-label or look at it in a different light.
6. Use humor.
7. Have faith/hope.
8. Ask for and accept help.
9. Learn more about yourself and identify strengths.
10. Apply stress management techniques.

VI. **Stress - What Is It and How Does It Look?**

Provide this information in a lecture format.

- A. Define stress - a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation.

B. Change = Stress

Think of the body as an energy source. It produces and has available a limited amount of energy at any one time. The body will go into very rapid energy production when a person is frightened.

That empty or tight feeling in the stomach, the rapid breathing and the perspiration are all signs that the adrenalin is flowing and the body is working overtime to produce quick energy for the “fight or flight” response. However, the supply of this adrenalin produced energy is limited and this extra production strains the body.

Our bodies have a limited amount of energy. When continuous energy is needed to fight stress, energy is not available for a person to function in a healthy manner socially, emotionally or physically.

Exercise: **Symptoms of Stress Checklist** (handout)

Ask each person to check the symptoms of stress she/he has experienced in the past two weeks. Ask the group members to share their reactions to this exercise.

VII. Overall Methods for Addressing Stress

Provide information in a lecture format.

- A. Develop Awareness - Awareness is a reminder to step back and take a bigger perspective instead of being concerned over one issue. Awareness involves an objective look at daily events and emotions. One way to accomplish this is to keep a daily journal of feelings as well as a list of good and bad events and reactions to them.
- B. Adjust Attitudes - Stress is the result of one's reaction to events, not the events themselves. Adjusting attitude means recognizing that a person has a choice in how she/he will behaviorally react to events. Affirmations of competence and a positive outlook can neutralize negative thinking. By repeating positive statements aloud, an individual can begin to improve self-image.
- C. Take Action - There are two categories of action; physical activity and time management.
 - 1. Physical activity minimizes the effects of stress and releases tension. Deep breathing is essential to counteract stress. (At many federal agency fitness centers, gymnasiums, and/or seated massage are available).
 - 2. Time management means scheduling more effectively and trying not to procrastinate. When under stress, simple decisions can be more difficult. By structuring one's time, she/he will fall more readily back into patterns that are more comfortable.

VIII. Specific Stress Management Techniques

There is a handout of these techniques. Write techniques on a flip chart and provide information in a lecture format.

- A. Exercise - aerobic exercise to strengthen the heart and increase the number and size of blood vessels allows oxygen to get to more tissue (examples: running, cycling, swimming, brisk walking).
- B. Good Diet - includes fresh fruits and vegetables. Limit fats, meats, caffeine, alcohol and sugar.

Good eating habits - eat three meals a day and avoid snacks. At meals, eat healthy food as above. Keep weight within normal range for height and bone structure.

- C. A good night's sleep and rest periods during the day - sleep 6 to 9 hours per night. The amount of sleep a person needs varies from time to time and from person to person. More sleep is needed when someone is ill or recovering from an injury.

Also, plan rest periods during the day by taking time to walk around at lunch and talk with a friend. A person works better throughout the day when she/he has taken a lunch break.

- D. Limit smoking and drug use - this includes alcohol, sleeping pills and other over the counter drugs. Liquor and drugs reduce the perception of stress, but they do not reduce stress.
- E. Relaxation time each day - get involved with activities that provide a pleasurable experience (for example: groups/clubs, recreational activities, hobbies, spending time with friends, listening to music and dancing).

Exercise: **Relaxation Activities List** (handout)

Ask participants to make a list of 10 things they like to do. Then ask them to list next to each activity, how much time each activity would take to do. Then ask them to plan today, tomorrow and the rest of the week the activities they could do each day in an effort to relax and reduce their stress level.

- F. Positive Attitude and Flexibility - accept that one cannot control everything. Avoid sulking.
- G. Supportive People - The most resourceful people are those who really listen without judgement and who help a person listen to her/himself. Friends, family members and neighbors are often supportive people.

Support also comes from belonging to a group that shares one's goals, ideals and values. Learn to praise yourself and accept praise.

- H. Change in Moderation - while some change can be refreshing and stimulating, dealing with many changes at once will be exhausting. Whenever change is within one's control, it should be limited. A person should not change everything in his/her life at once.
- I. Say NO when it is appropriate - one person cannot fix everyone else's problems and relieve everyone else of their burdens. Everyone must take responsibility for their own lives. Be assertive.

J. Keep a sense of humor - at all times. Everyone needs to be able to laugh at themselves and at the humor that is around them. When one is particularly stressed, she/he might try watching a comedy or listening to a comedian.

K. Deep Breathing - controlled inhaling and exhaling of air to calm the nerves and relax the muscles.

Exercise: *Sit upright, in a relaxed position with feet on the floor and hands on your lap. Breathe through your nose. Breathe in and push your abdomen out to take in as much air as possible. Hold the air for a count of 5 (seconds). Then slowly release the air while sucking in the abdomen to push out the last of the air. Repeat this at least 5 times.*

L. Stress Reduction Plan

Exercise: **Stress Reduction Plan** (handout)
Ask each group member to fill out the handout which includes the following 4 statements:

This is one of my stress-related problems.

This is what I am doing that needs to be changed.

This is what I will do instead.

This is how my plan will work: what? where? how often?

This is how I will evaluate my progress.

Process the activity with the group. Ask if anyone would like to share problems/ plans or would like to comment.

IX. Summary and Evaluation form.

Reviewing a Past Successful Change

1. Describe generally one change situation that you encountered and were able to cope with successfully.

2. Describe in detail the steps you took to deal with the change.

3. What skills or personal traits did you use or develop in coping with the change?

4. What can you do now to cope with new changes in your life?

All adults have developed ways to cope with change. Some ways are more positive and effective than others. As adults experience change, they learn to be more effective and positive in approaching a change and less stressed.

Identifying Others Who Can Help and Provide Support

Identify people below who could assist you with child care, transportation, listening to your concerns, providing encouragement and information you need to deal with a change. Next to the person's name, indicate how she/he can assist you.

FAMILY MEMBERS:

FRIENDS/NEIGHBORS:

CHURCH MEMBERS:

OTHER GROUPS/CLUB MEMBERS:

SERVICE/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

CO-WORKERS/SUPERVISOR:

PROFESSIONALS:

Symptoms of Stress Checklist

These symptoms can indicate stress, especially when appearing in clusters and when they represent noticeable changes in behavior. People may exhibit symptoms and suffer from stress even if they are not aware of feeling pressured. Check those symptoms you have experienced recently.

BEHAVIORAL

- ☐ Heavy smoking
- ☐ Increased use of alcohol
- ☐ Drug use
- ☐ High-risk behavior
- ☐ Violence
- ☐ Overeating
- ☐ Hyperactivity
- ☐ Sleep disturbances
- ☐ Nightmares
- ☐ Overwork

ATTITUDINAL

- ☐ Boredom
- ☐ Negativity
- ☐ Distrust
- ☐ Despair, loss of hope
- ☐ Feelings of powerlessness
- ☐ Self-righteousness
- ☐ Feeling trapped
- ☐ Self-doubt
- ☐ Grandiosity

EMOTIONAL

- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Feelings of being overwhelmed
- ☐ Increased fear, paranoia
- ☐ Feeling out of control
- ☐ Guilt
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Panic
- ☐ Feeling disconnected from emotions
- ☐ Feelings of tension, pressure

PHYSICAL

- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Indigestion
- ☐ Nausea
- ☐ Diarrhea
- ☐ Constipation
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Frequent colds
- ☐ Weight loss or gain
- ☐ Changes in menstrual cycle
- ☐ Heart palpitations
- ☐ Vision problem

SOCIAL

- ☐ Anger, irritability
- ☐ Withdrawal from friends
- ☐ Marital/relationship problems
- ☐ Restricted social contacts
- ☐ Critical toward self, others
- ☐ Conflict with others
- ☐ Over reliance on others

MENTAL

- ☐ Difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Distractibility
- ☐ Inability to make decisions
- ☐ Short attention span
- ☐ Intrusive images/thoughts
- ☐ Hyper-alertness
- ☐ Self-blaming
- ☐ Distorted thinking
- ☐ Frequent daydreams
- ☐ Avoidance of certain thoughts

Specific Stress Management Techniques

- A. **EXERCISE** - aerobic exercise to strengthen the heart and increase the number and size of blood vessels allows oxygen to get to more tissue (examples: running, cycling, swimming, brisk walking.)

- B. **GOOD DIET** - includes fresh fruits and vegetables. Limit fats, meats, caffeine, alcohol and sugar.

Good eating habits - eat three meals a day and avoid snacks. At meals, eat healthy food as above. Keep weight within normal range for height and bone structure.

- C. **GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP AND REST PERIODS IN THE DAY** - sleep 6 to 9 hours per night. The amount of sleep a person needs varies from time to time and from person to person. More sleep is needed when someone is ill or recovering from an injury.

Also plan rest periods during the day by taking time to walk around at lunch and talk with a friend. A person works better throughout the day when she/he has taken a lunch break.

- D. **LIMIT SMOKING AND DRUG USE** - this includes alcohol, sleeping pills and other over the counter drugs. Liquor and drugs reduce the perception of stress, but they do not reduce stress.

- E. **RELAXATION TIME EACH DAY** - get involved with activities that provide a pleasurable experience (for example: groups/clubs, recreational activities, hobbies, spending time with friends, listening to music and dancing.)

USE RELAXATION ACTIVITIES LIST.

- F. **POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND FLEXIBILITY** - accept that one cannot control everything. Avoid sulking.

- G. **SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE** - The most resourceful people are those who really listen without judgement and who help a person listen to her/himself. Friends, family members and neighbors are often supportive people. Learn to praise yourself and accept praise. Support also comes from belonging to a group that shares one's goals, ideals and values. USE THE SUPPORT PERSONS HANDOUT.

- H. CHANGE IN MODERATION - while some change can be refreshing and stimulating, dealing with many changes at once will be exhausting. Whenever change is within one's control, it should be limited. A person should not change everything in his/her life at once.
- I. SAY NO WHEN IT IS APPROPRIATE - one person cannot fix everyone else's problems and relieve everyone else of their burdens. Everyone must take responsibility for their own lives. Be assertive.
- J. KEEP A SENSE OF HUMOR - at all times. Everyone needs to be able to laugh at themselves and at the humor that is around them. When one is particularly stressed, she/he might try watching a comedy or listening to a comedian.
- K. DEEP BREATHING - controlled inhaling and exhaling of air to calm the nerves and relax the muscles.
- Exercise: INSTRUCTIONS - Sit upright, in a relaxed position with feet on the floor and hands on you lap. Breathe through your nose. Breathe in and push your abdomen out to take in as much air as possible. Hold the air for a count of 5 (seconds). Then slowly release the air while sucking in the abdomen to push out the last of the air. Repeat this at least 5 times.
- L. STRESS REDUCTION PLAN - USE THE PLAN IN THE HANDOUT.

Relaxation Activities List

List below 10 activities you like to do and find relaxing. Then indicate on the right, how much time is needed to do each activity.

ACTIVITIES

TIME NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Below, plan activities you could do to relax in the next 8 days.

Date Activity	Date Activity	Date Activity	Date Activity
Date Activity	Date Activity	Date Activity	Date Activity

My Stress Reduction Plan

Each of us can reduce stress in our lives by finding new ways to deal with continually stressful situations. The following statements can serve as a guide for finding new methods of coping.

- 1. This is one of my stress-related problems.**

- 2. This is what I am doing that needs to be changed.**

- 3. This is what I can do instead.**

- 4. This is how my plan will work: what? where? how often?**

- 5. This is how I will evaluate my progress.**

Repeat steps 1 - 5 for each stress-related problem in your life.

Congratulations! You are now on your way to a happier, healthier and low stress life!